

## 4.0 RESULTS

### 4.1 PUBLIC COMMENTS

#### 4.1.1 Primitive Character (102 comments)

Over one hundred comments identified the primitive character of the King Range landscape as a central priority they wished to see continued. Most of these expressed their appreciation for the uniqueness of the area and their desire that it remain unchanged. Words frequently used to describe the area include: primitive, undeveloped, wild, remote, solitude, not crowded, wilderness, and roadless. Often people emphasized how unusual it is to find these qualities along coastal lands, as so much of California's coast is heavily developed. Some examples of these comments follow:

"I would like the KRNCA to remain as 'pristine' as possible, so that future generations are able to experience the environment with few developments and urban amenities."

"Benefits: quiet, solitude, open space. Low visitation, low impact. A sense of wildness unlike most state and national parks. We still have the opportunity [to experience] these qualities."

"First, I would like to commend the BLM for having managed this area well in the past, preserving its wildness and ecological health. It is good to know that this still-wild piece of coastline still exists in this overpopulated and overdeveloped state of ours. Thus I would like to see the BLM keep it this way into the far future."



Approximately twenty comments focused more specifically on actions or situations that negatively impact the primitive character of the landscape. These included the effect of increasing levels of use, of motorized uses in particular, and of excessive management. Several people singled out military flyovers as reducing the wild feel of the King Range. One suggested that fewer temporary driftwood shelters on the coast are needed to retain a primitive backcountry experience. At one of the public meetings, a strong sentiment emerged from some of the participants that the BLM should preserve the wild setting as a priority over increased public use or commercial gain. And one writer reminded the agency:

"Remember a hands-off attitude is okay, generally. You don't need to 'manage' it to have it be a great region for everyone to enjoy!"

Another theme in this group of comments is the importance of scenic and visual resources. Again, many people singled out having such dramatic views of an undeveloped stretch of California coastline as the highlight of their experience of the King Range. Several people urged limits on structures (such as communication towers or lighting in Shelter Cove) or other types of development that could negatively impact the scenic qualities of the area. One specifically suggested limiting open fires as detracting from the beauty of the beach. A sampling of these comments includes:

“Undeveloped coastline offering a view of old California with spectacular scenery and climate.”

“It provides a scenic solitary alternative to a sometimes hectic yet sedentary life. The physical exercise in the scenic landscape brings balance to my life, and makes me more healthy and whole. Just being there lifts my spirits.”

“Wild, scenic with some access, kept mostly primitive. Appreciate the opportunity to experience the constantly changing coastline—a great place to take visitors!”

## **4.1.2 Recreation and Visitor Use**

### **Non-Motorized Recreation Access (60 comments)**

Sixty comments related to non-motorized recreation access in the King Range. A few simply reflected appreciation for the recreation opportunities available in the area, including hiking and backpacking, surfing, fishing, horse or bicycle riding, camping and hunting. One person specified the preservation of backcountry wilderness access, another felt dogs should be allowed in the area. Four people identified the importance of keeping recreation uses low-impact, including encouraging use of bear canisters among backcountry campers.

Eleven comments concerned regulation of recreation access. Some were worried about losing access, particularly in comparison to the nearby Headwaters Forest where some felt they’d been excluded. Others cited conflicts on trails between different user groups, such as hikers, equestrians and bicyclists, and suggested separate trails, designations or limitations on heavier-impact uses. In contrast, several wrote to caution against too many restrictions, and particularly excluding certain non-motorized user groups but not others. At one of the public meetings, a group called for restricting public access to the Mill Creek area specifically, to preserve old growth forests as well as reduce fire danger and trespassing.

Ten comments raised the issue of universal access, compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations, and/or providing more “friendly” access for seniors or others who may be less mobile. At one public meeting, someone suggested a need for disabled access “beyond the parking lot,” and another person chimed in: “I don’t think my heart should be affected because my legs don’t work.” As regular visitors to the King Range area, this increasingly becomes a concern. Several people suggested allowing use of off-highway vehicles (OHVs) or providing drive-in access to Hidden Valley for the elderly or those with disabilities; others suggested providing handicapped access trails at such places as Chemise Mountain, Black Sands Beach, or Tolkán. This sentiment was summed up by one writer as follows:

“There is certainly room for all classes of visitors. Unfortunately, current policy seems to favor young, physically fit individuals. Easier motor access to all areas should be a priority for handicapped or elderly.”

A number of comments were received specific to certain user groups or activities. A number of people mentioned the good trail access for hiking and backpacking, and wished for this to continue. One person requested that people be allowed to sleep in their cars overnight at trailheads. Access for undeveloped camping was appreciated, but one writer expressed concern that too many people choose to camp at the mouths of creeks in the backcountry, possibly interfering with wildlife as well as causing contamination of the water, and suggested restricting camping within 200 yards of creeks. A related concern was with the concentration of surfers at Big Flat causing sanitation and congestion problems.



Several people commented on enjoying horseback riding but feeling that equestrians were being “squeezed out” of the King Range. One suggested that horses could be used to facilitate access for the disabled. Several other people wrote about bicycle access; one wanted mountain bikes to be barred from King Range trails and allowed on roads only, while others expressed their enthusiasm for biking on King Range trails and wishing them to remain open. One letter suggested the following distinction:

“Bicycles should be considered a form of non-motorized travel, rather than a human-powered form of off-highway-vehicle. Bicyclists are less like motorcyclists without engines; more like hikers with wheels. When the BLM formulated its formal OHV Strategy, there was consideration of including bicycling. The agency chose to create separate strategies, recognizing the vast difference between OHVs and bikes.”

The issue of hunting in the King Range generated ten comments. Two people advocated eliminating all hunting from the area, while three felt it should remain or were concerned with access being reduced. One person suggested that target practice should not be allowed when the hunting season is closed, and that hunting season should not open just before Labor Day. Others worried about conflicts between hunters and other recreationists, particularly hikers

and the possible risk of injury, or questioned whether hunting is compatible with the overall wild character and ecological sustainability of the King Range.

### **Motorized Recreation Access (103 comments)**

This category represents a large number of comments, totaling one hundred and three. Fourteen of these were specifically in favor of allowing access to motorized vehicles such as OHVs, 4x4s, and/or motorcycles. A number of these related specifically to utilizing motorized vehicles for elderly or disabled people who might not be able to access the area otherwise. Others requested access be opened (or reopened) to specific areas, such as Gitchell Creek, the Smith-Etter road, or beach access in general. One participant at a public meeting felt so upset with increased regulations on OHV use that he wanted to move away, after living in the area for many years. Another simply requested that access not be restricted any further:

“I’m a regular visitor to the KRNCA. I feel it is essential to not close more existing vehicular roadways in the King Range NCA.”

In contrast, fifty-eight comments advocated not allowing access to motorized vehicles of any kind, or not opening any new areas to motorized use. Many of these cited the primitive character of the King Range and the adverse impact of noise, tracks, and ecological impacts of motorized recreation. Some representative examples include:

[paraphrased from a public meeting:] As much green as possible, as few roads as possible, access methods with minimal impact.

“Worry about inadequate management i.e. allowing motorized vehicles; keep services near existing roads. Do not increase auto use.”

“I only hiked the Lost Coast Trail, but I think the current programs on that trail are doing a great job in preserving the trail. Please never let motorized vehicles on the Lost Coast Trail! Noise pollution from motorized vehicles.”

“Your office has done an excellent job of managing the King Range over the last decade, particularly in your decision to close the Black Sands Beach area to off-road vehicles. I would fully support any further closing of roads within the NCA if needed for unique habitat preservation or establishment of corridors between current roadless areas.”

Eight comments specifically addressed access by plane, boat or other motorized watercraft, particularly at Big Flat. Several expressed concern that these types of motorized access allowed too heavy of use in this backcountry area, and could reduce the primitive experience sought by others. Two comments expressing different sides of the issue are quoted here:

“I’m concerned with preserving reasonable day use access to surf at Big Flat, which is mainly by boat; air access at both Big and Miller Flats should be protected for those legally entitled.”

“Surfing at Big Flat has turned congested. Since there is no motorized access from the south or north, trash and food left by surfers, where they defecate and the length of their stay has greatly impact the coast. Get the group of local surfers to a meeting and discuss the impact. Signage for the out of the area surfers, letters to Surfrider

Foundation and a KMUD talk show could help as well. If the surfers do not police themselves, restrict the number of boats per surfing day that launch out of the Shelter Cove ramp; maybe even a permit and fee process until the situation improves regarding voluntary trash removal.”

An additional twenty-one comments urged the BLM to not allow vehicular use of the King Range beaches:

“Complete exclusions of motorized vehicles from beaches. Restriction on excessive use, no more roads, no paving. I want it to look the same as it was 30 years ago when I first visited the area except no vehicles.”

“In October of 2001 I had the opportunity to backpack with a friend from Black Sands Beach to Buck Creek and I was in absolute awe of the area. It is the only place I have ever had the opportunity to hike and camp and explore coastal beaches without the effects of 4x4s or ATVs. Before I had only known of that type of solitude in the wilderness areas of the high-country. The King Range is a uniquely peaceful spot on our Pacific coast that I hope will remain every bit as such.”

One person suggested using plants rather than fences to protect the beach from motorized access. Another letter requested that some beach areas be designated for mountain bike use. And one person wrote to specifically request a restriction on vehicle size at Mattole beach.

### **Recreation Development and Facilities (178 comments)**

This is the largest single category of public comments, comprising 178 all together. Some were fairly general, but others offered specific suggestions, such as locations of trails, facilities desired, or level of development. Among the total, twenty-seven comments emphasized maintaining a relatively low level of development with a rustic or primitive theme. A few of these comments are included here:

“Visitor services should be kept to a minimum and campgrounds developed or expanded only as demand requires; again, less is more.”

“No more ‘improvements’—no hook ups, no more picnic tables—no showers etc. I want it to look like it did before you put picnic tables in, but too late I guess for that.”

“I believe the primitive facilities currently in place should not be upgraded. We have many parks in the region that appeal to tourist comforts. Having this area remain in a primitive state will also fill an important recreational need. This small vestige of original coastline, despite its past human use, is the closest to pristine coastlands we have. As such it should be treasured and kept as close to its original state as possible for its ecological, scientific, educational and recreational value.”

Thirty-one comments focused on trails, including singletrack trails for bicycles. Many of these suggested improving trails and providing better trail markings and maps. One person suggested more loop trails, another hoped to see more walking trails close to the Shelter Cove Road. One letter suggested prohibiting mountain bike use in the King Range WSAs, while others suggested bikes can be compatible with wilderness values, that blaming cyclists for trail problems

is unfair, and offered maintenance ideas that could help maintain trails under a variety of uses. Some of these suggestions are included here:

“More walking trails closer to Shelter Cove Road, especially ‘nature walks,’ with noteworthy species, sights or geology marked. This would be greatly appreciated by many of us here in Whitethorn.”

“Additional foot trails, i.e., from Chemise Mt. to beach (via new Chinqapin trail?) — more possibility of trail loops. Trail to access Bear Creek via Tolkan camp.”

“We request that the plan prohibit mountain bike use on trails in the proposed King Range Wilderness as described in Representative Mike Thompson and Senator Barbara Boxer's California Wild Heritage Act of 2002. This is important for the following reasons: 1. Most mountain bicycling currently occurs outside of the proposed wilderness. 2. Many of the trails in the region are steep and highly erosive. Wet-season use is particularly damaging. 3. In areas such as Lake Tahoe and Downieville where mountain bikes have become popular they are actually quite dangerous to other recreationists, especially to people on foot. It only takes one near-miss with a mountain bike to become paranoid around blind curves. This is not conducive to the type of peace and solitude we should expect in many parts of the King Range NCA. We must preserve the region's peace and solitude by prohibiting mountain bikes before they become popular. 4. While we understand that the BLM cannot manage its lands based on proposed legislation, if you ban mountain bike use now before it is even remotely popular this will spare you a great deal of trouble when the California Wild Heritage Act passes.”

“IMBA encourages the BLM to plan to provide new and better bicycling opportunities through its King Range NCA Plan. This is the first action item in the new National Mountain Bicycling Strategic Action Plan. We particularly support the creation of single track trails. Narrow trails, as opposed to roads that can handle automobiles or ATVs, provide the greatest satisfaction to most cyclists. Narrow trails can be sustainably constructed to meet a wide level of bicycling skill levels, from beginner to expert. Most BLM lands have a significant array of roads, and few roadless areas and trails. Because bicyclists value traveling in more natural, primitive places, we support the maintenance of roadless conditions wherever they exist. We also encourage the restoration of roadless conditions where possible and appropriate. Toward this end, we encourage the conversion of some roads into singletrack trails.”

Thirty-seven comments addressed roads as a facilities or development issue. Several requested that no new roads be constructed, and/or the existing roads be maintained but not upgraded. In a similar vein, a number of comments suggested that the BLM remove roads where possible, often to address environmental degradation resulting from traffic, or to change the timing of seasonal road closures to better reflect environmental conditions. Three people mentioned that road access to the King Range is currently difficult but did not want it changed, as the poor access might be helping to reduce use levels and/or traffic. A few sample comments are included here:

“We also request that new road construction be prohibited, except as needed to fulfill your legal obligation to inholders.”

“One other note on roads: The roads in the King Range are open on April 1 and close on November 1 to prevent road damage during the rainy months. But I feel that open period is too long. The King Range always receives significant rainfall in April, and in some years the rains can last into May. October is usually fairly dry, but we do get enough rainfall in some years to warrant earlier road closures than Nov. 1. The roads in the King Range should not open before May 1st and should close by October 15th to avoid damage to roads and surrounding environments.”

“Of course BLM as well as the County of Humboldt will be under more pressure to provide better roads for resident and visitor access. However, there is an old Taoist saying, ‘bad roads make good countryside.’ No need to ‘improve roads.’ Better to spend money ‘putting roads to bed.’ The revisited transportation plan could emphasize more road removal.”

Other people wanted to see improved road access, construction and/or maintenance. One suggested resurfacing Shelter Cove Road; another wished to see Kings Peak Road paved; a third advocated unlocking the Smith-Etter gate. A participant at a public meeting specified that rough roads should be maintained as “separators” (i.e., to keep regular cars out while allowing 4WDs/OHV through) and managed as primitive backcountry roadways leading to particular destinations or attractions. A discussion group at one public meeting recommended changing one-way roads to loops to improve traffic flows, and several people wrote about the need for better pull-outs for slow vehicles. A few made specific maintenance suggestions, including the following:

“Changes I'd like to see: much more sediment reduction on the dirt road system throughout the King Range, by installing ditch relief culverts closer together, rolling dips where appropriate and more outslowing to reduce outside berms.”

Other comments included road safety, pedestrian or bicycle safety in particular, and a need for better road signs. One person wrote about the adverse impacts of too many road closures on access for fire prevention and suppression.

As a separate issue from roads, a group of five comments highlighted parking as an issue to be addressed—in particular the need for additional parking on holidays. Better parking for horse trailers and at Black Sands Beach specifically was also mentioned. Three other comments suggested using a shuttle service to alleviate parking problems and traffic in the King Range.

Fifty-three comments related to campgrounds and other recreation sites. A substantial number of these focused on maintaining the primitive character of many sites in the King Range, without any further development or improvement:

“We don't want RV campsites. We want the type of tourists that are interested in a wilderness experience in a primitive style.”

“I would like the campground to remain primitive—it should reflect conservation.”

“Outhouses, potable water, trash, recycling bins—everything that is there should remain as it is. No more improvement.”



Furthermore, a few people suggested that some of the existing campgrounds should be made more primitive, or could have a walk-in only section, so that some campers could get away from vehicles without requiring a long pack-in trip. The camp at the mouth of the Mattole was specified by one writer as a good candidate for this kind of change.

***Camper at Nadelos Campground***



In contrast, a large number of comments desired improved or additional facilities at recreation sites. Quite a few of these specified improved (or “real”) bathrooms and trash receptacles. Other suggestions included improving access to beach areas at Mal Coombs and Little Black Sands beach, better sites to camp with horses, somewhat-developed pack-in campsites, and a new “drive-in” access campground along the coast, perhaps near Shelter Cove. One person hoped to see a tent-trailer or small cabin camp set up near Bridge Creek to house summer interns or workers, and another person requested installing a coin-operated shower at some of the camps. One organization wrote requesting more bicycle-friendly facilities and camping opportunities.

Three additional comments related specifically to backcountry sites, including Big Flat; one suggested that improved recreation facilities elsewhere could relieve use pressure on the backcountry primitive areas; a second wanted to see fewer temporary driftwood shelters on the coast; and a third argued that Big Flat should be recognized as a natural gathering area in the backcountry and managed as such, with a bit more development than the rest of the wilderness area is allowed to accommodate the higher use levels. This last commenter also suggested considering the driftwood shelters as “folk architecture.”

Six comments identified sources of fresh potable water as key development issues at a number of sites, including Big Flat, Mattole Beach, and Tolkán and Horse Mountain camps. These water sources were cited as critical both for drinking water and for fire prevention/suppression.

Finally, twelve comments offered suggestions relating to information and/or interpretation facilities and signs. The BLM Project Office and Visitor Center at Whitethorn received praise, with one person wanting to see it open on weekends and holidays. Some participants would like more interpretive signs in the King Range (particularly locally-produced ones), such as at



trailheads or other sites; others requested less signage. Several people would like to see an interpretive trail, with relatively easy access for wheelchairs or strollers, including labeled plants and information on the ecological systems in the King Range. One writer described a proposal for a new interpretive facility:

“The InfoBarn: Restore the big barn at the BLM: make it rain-proof, put in skylights or dormers for light, and a rough plank-floor. Keep the barn ambiance. Lots of visitors from urban/suburban areas have never been in a funky old barn before, and will be thrilled by the experience. Use the barn as a natural history, science and education center, with displays and exhibits, books and science journals, laboratory benches and (some) 100X and 10x microscopes.”

### **Recreation Use Levels (76 comments)**

Seventy-six comments expressed concern about increasing recreation use levels (from the growing number of visitors) and the effect on the King Range. Sixteen of these addressed effects of overuse on visitor experience, such as a sense of congestion, trash, and crowding—worries the area will be “loved to death” like the Yosemite Valley. Some examples read:

[paraphrased from a public meeting:] Find ways to curb the projected visitor growth rates—can prevent high impact and provide a better experience for visitors.

“The more hikers, the more poop, trash, fires, bears, etc. happens. NO MORE!! I used to [visit] often—not any more because of too many tourists!”

“Trailhead quotas might be necessary to protect the quality of the experience. Overuse could easily degrade the wilderness experience.”

Nine additional comments focused on the effects of overuse on resources and environmental quality, particularly wildlife and wilderness values:

[paraphrased from a public meeting:] Too much camping at creek mouths—impacts wildlife.

[paraphrased from a public meeting:] Minimize user days thru public relations (outreach)—emphasize other values of KRNCA that deserve recognition (e.g. wildlife, wilderness).

“Visitors should be able to enjoy KRNCA, but not damage it through overuse or inappropriate use. For example, wildlife, e.g., pupping seals, feeding shorebirds, are harassed by unleashed dogs.”

Nearly half of the comments in this category, thirty-six in all, advocated some kind of management of use to reduce impacts. Some of these simply suggested managing numbers of visitors; others had more specific ideas:

[paraphrased from a public meeting:] Regulating number of people hiking the Lost Coast Trail—permit system? Heavy use impacts resources and social—need limits. Also need to connect coastal trail north and south around Shelter Cove.

[paraphrased from a public meeting:] Seasonal access to reduce impacts as use increases (trails and other environmental impacts)

[paraphrased from a public meeting:] Keep some zones/visitor use areas rugged - maybe even make less accessible in some areas while facilitating use in others.

“Keep permits in place for all who use it. Consider a carrying capacity and use lottery for permits.”

“Limit numbers hiking on beach at any given time with priority given to residents.”

“Managing recreational impacts to the King Range through limitations on group size, commercial outfitter/packer services and development of recreational facilities: Recreational usage of the King Range NCA is growing rapidly, and the Management Plan must guide actions that ensure that recreational impacts will be minimized.”

Taking a somewhat different direction than the rest of these comments, one writer expressed a caution regarding use restrictions:

“When facing a situation of over-use of trails, land managers should employ management methods that do not discriminate among trail use types. Restrictions should not apply narrowly to cyclists, equestrians or hikers, and instead should apply to all non-motorized user groups collectively.”

Ten additional comments expressed specific concern with the issue of group size, particularly at the mouth of the Mattole River. These all suggested that large groups, such as the recent Rainbow gatherings, should be restricted or discouraged, due to heavy impacts on sensitive environments, traffic, and local community character. Several also advocated not allowing fireworks to be set off so as not to attract large crowds, and a few people recommended continuing a policy of not allowing commercial outfitters to lead groups over holiday weekends.

### **Recreation Fees (9 comments)**

Nine comments addressed fees at the King Range, specifically keeping them low or non-existent. Several specified that local residents should have free day use access. Two others suggested that commercial groups should pay higher fees than individual users, particularly to cover the extra services that large groups might require. One comment recommended that there should be no fee at Mattole Beach.

### **Interpretation and Education (62 comments)**

Sixty-two comments encouraged more interpretation and education programs. Some of these were quite general, others specified more information needed on different access points to the King Range, changes in management and use policies, natural history, and use by Native Americans. Several people suggested having an introductory video available for new visitors (at King Range facilities and/or on the internet) to familiarize them with the area and its conditions. In addition, five comments involved more information on safety concerns, such as the following:

[paraphrased from a public meeting:] Concerned about fire in area—endangering community? Especially concerned that so many more visitors are coming, may not know how to prevent fires—BLM responsibility to protect community.

[paraphrased from a public meeting:] Provide more information to public—make sure public is aware of personal responsibility, also risks for hunting, distance to medical aid, waves, etc.

### ***Interpretive Signs at Mal Coombs Park***



A group of sixteen comments emphasized the role of interpretation and education in encouraging a responsible low-impact use ethic among residents and visitors, following the theme of “leave no trace.” Many of these particularly focused on the increase in visitors and a need for better understanding about the effects of humans in the backcountry, including trash, sanitation concerns, and respect for both the natural world and others’ experience of it. Several specified the use of on-site information to get the word out:

[paraphrased from a public meeting:] Keep education as a tool to minimize impacts of recreation, such as trailhead kiosks, use of internet, back country rangers and other law enforcement programs.

“Keep it basic—enhance wilderness experience by posting “no-trace” ethic requirements at trailheads.”

This leads into a second group of sixteen comments that addressed education facilities, displays, and other materials. Many suggested continued or more educational and interpretive signs at trailheads, on trails, etc., but several cautioned against over-signing. One person suggested making tide charts available with instructions on how to use them. One writer urged the BLM to be sensitive to portraying the local communities’ perspectives on the King Range in interpretive materials, particularly their role in helping to restore the area’s ecological systems. Another gave an example from Colorado of educational materials for trails that help to promote responsible riding among mountain bikers. A few other specific suggestions include the following:

[paraphrased from a public meeting:] Interpretive nature trail with easy access—access for wheelchairs, strollers etc., information about threatened and endangered species (with labeled plants), information on keeping access low-impact, etc. [Intended] for those who can't access wilder areas, as well as an introduction for those who will be going farther in.

“If the King Range is the showcase of the BLM, then let its science centers be a showcase for life, geology and good land-management information.”

“A northern resource center conveniently co-operated by the Middle Mattole Conservancy, BLM and locals with library and community/visitor information center near Honeydew.”

A third group of fifteen comments recommended the use of “in-person” education and interpretation, with a wide variety of suggestions. Several suggested tapping local expertise in education efforts, through guided walks, volunteer programs or school visits. Others mentioned the importance of rangers, both at the Visitor Center and in the backcountry, for providing useful information and advice. One writer suggested connecting with local schools in southern Humboldt and northern Mendocino counties to offer classes or programs for students, while another identified nearby universities as sources of advanced degree students looking for research projects that could complement King Range educational programs. Volunteer trailwork programs were also mentioned as effective educational experiences.

### **4.1.3 Community Issues**

#### **Community Involvement and Collaboration (48 comments)**

Forty-eight comments related to community involvement and collaboration with BLM's management of the King Range. Twelve of these stressed the importance of maintaining the existing good relationship and coordination with local communities. Specific suggestions included working together on fire protection and prevention, coordinating with private landowners on rescues and litter removal, involving local volunteers on King Range projects, and partnering to raise funds. Keeping the communities informed and involved, as well as “playing down the image of ‘federal government’ management,” was the overall theme of these comments. One writer requested that the BLM continue to recognize and encourage community use of several parks along the periphery of the King Range, such as the Mouth of the Mattole, Honeydew Creek, and A.W. Way camps.

A larger group of comments, 36 in all, focused more specifically on collaborative projects between the BLM and non-profits, community groups and other organizations. These covered a range of projects from environmental education to ecological restoration, and encouraged the BLM to continue supporting these kinds of collaborative efforts. Quite a few cited existing efforts between local organizations and the BLM to restore the Mattole River watershed and fisheries as a particularly successful joint effort that has served as a model for similar kinds of projects around the nation. Several people suggested using local experts to assist with management, regulation, and/or interpretation of the area. Nature walks were mentioned several times as venues for local involvement with educating both tourists and other locals (particularly students) about the area. Others called for more programs for area students, both

in schools and out on the King Range, to promote environmental values and scientific study. A few representative comments include:

[Paraphrased from a public meeting:] Partnerships and education: guided hikes, web sites, presentations at local schools and communities on ecological values—reach the young people. Also involve community in trail work and other projects, and develop visitor center in towns (not trailheads) with local students and others to work in.

[Paraphrased from a public meeting:] Opportunities with local schools to promote values of KRNCA (i.e., forestry as monoculture vs. restoration/ecology/sustainability)—provide facilities for learning (i.e., living classrooms outdoors).

“EPIC encourages the BLM to work with non-governmental organizations and local schools to remove invasive species, including the California Native Plant Society, Mattole Restoration Council, and others.”

### **Community Social/Economic Impacts (39 comments)**

Related to the above group, 39 comments highlighted concerns or suggestions regarding the social and/or economic impacts of BLM activities on local communities. Eleven of these encouraged consideration of local businesses in decisions about hiring and work contracts, often recommending that locals be given some kind of preference. This would both boost the local economy and build stronger networks between the BLM and local communities. Others suggested encouraging tourists to patronize local businesses and/or support greater local development of visitor services. One suggested listing local businesses, services, entertainment opportunities, etc. on the BLM’s website.

More than half of the comments in this category were directed at the issue of community character. While a few of these promoted economic sustainability of the area, with tourism framed as creating more economic opportunity, the majority voiced concerns about negative impacts of increased visitation on the local sense of place. Several people seemed to feel that local towns derive little economic benefit from tourists, yet bear the costs of more traffic, crowding, or having to deal with “‘urban’ people who don’t understand how their actions may impact local property owners.” One writer encouraged the BLM to be sensitive to local culture in both their management actions and interpretation, as local understanding of the area may differ significantly from the agency’s own perceptions. This sentiment is reflected in the following comments:

[Paraphrased from a local meeting:] Local culture is more important than allowable uses by public and large, economic opportunities. Maintain character of local communities as opposed to “gateways to KRNCA.”

“Less advertising. There are communities that WANT tourism (such as Ferndale)—this [Petrolia] is NOT one of them. This community values scenic beauty without recreation or tourist dollars. This community values quiet, serenity, solitude. Those values need to be respected.”

Three comments suggested creating some sort of system for prioritizing use or access for locals before that of the general public. One specified that the Mattole River area should remain

“resident friendly.” The other two, both paraphrased from public meetings, suggested the following:

Establish different permit systems for local uses vs. outside visitation (e.g., annual pass or “neighborhood” sticker on car).

“Grandfathering” of uses with local community, flexibility on certain restrictions.

#### 4.1.4 Natural and Cultural Resources

##### Vegetation/Ecosystems (90 comments)

Ninety comments concerned either vegetation or ecosystems in general, including plants, animals, and other aspects of the physical environment. (Wildlife-only comments were placed in their own category, described below.) Nearly half of these focused on restoration of native flora and fauna, including grasses, Roosevelt elk, and aquatic species. Particular types of habitat such as riparian zones or open meadows were singled out by a few individuals as needing restoration. Several also stressed the importance of continuing to work cooperatively with local groups involved in collaborative restoration efforts:

“BLM should also seek cooperative management partnerships with neighboring landowners and local non-profit organizations, including the Mattole Restoration Council, Mattole Salmon Group, and others, to work towards landscape-scale restoration of the forests and watersheds.”



A particular issue identified in these scoping comments is the removal and restoration of former roads. These were cited as possible sources of erosion into watercourses, causing various types of environmental problems. An example suggests restoration attention needed at a specific roadway:

“The Telegraph Ridge road beyond Kinsey Ridge trailhead should be put to bed. That is an old and misplaced logging road. It washes out each rainy season and is thus a continuous source of sedimentation. If it is deemed necessary to provide fire access in that area, a ridgetop shaded fuel break would be more effective and appropriate.”

The BLM was encouraged to decommission and remove roads where possible and continue with their rehabilitation back to a more natural state.

Six comments suggested a need for greater monitoring, inventorying, and/or scientific research on the ecological systems in the King



Range. In addition, a large group of comments mentioned the importance of long-term ecological integrity and sustainability in the area. Here are a few examples:

“Issue of balance; favor ecological model and solitude over recreation and other uses; willing to have restrictions to protect ecological values.”

“Intact ecosystems - minimize ecological fragmentation.”

“As an amateur botanist, avid hiker and backpacker, I encourage you to protect the biodiversity of this area and its wilderness values. And as someone who cares deeply about the health of our planet, I encourage you to protect this pristine area for our clean air and water, rich wildlife, and for future generations. Thank you for managing responsibly.”

### **Wildlife (36 comments)**

Thirty-six comments identified protection of wildlife as a key concern. Several of these were fairly general, simply requesting that wildlife be given maximum consideration in management, particularly in light of increased visitation in the King Range. A few mentioned connections to other protected areas in the region, which should be recognized as wildlife corridors and managed in a way compatible with that role.

As suggested in the previous discussion of ecosystems, roughly three-quarters of the wildlife comments suggested reintroduction of particular native animal species, mostly Roosevelt elk. This species' role in the ecosystem as a large herbivore was cited by several people, as well as the possibility of working cooperatively with local landowners to reestablish a population in the King Range. A letter from a local organization, EPIC, gives a detailed description of the issue:

“EPIC believes the BLM should explore the feasibility of reintroducing Roosevelt elk to the northern and central portions of the King Range. The herd of Roosevelt elk that occupies the Sinkyone State Park and southern portion of the King Range has made a remarkable recovery, but the species remains extirpated throughout the majority of its historical range. There are limited public lands in which reintroduction of Roosevelt elk is possible, and the northern and central portions of the King Range are among the most suitable anywhere. EPIC urges the BLM to examine this possibility and implement a program to reestablish the Roosevelt elk in the central and northern portions of the King Range if it proves feasible.”

Other species mentioned for possible reintroduction to the King Range include marten, fishers, wild turkeys and boar for hunting, and California condors.

Finally, several comments echoed the above call for greater scientific studies and/or monitoring to be done on wildlife in the area, including raptors, carnivores, and songbirds. One writer suggested these projects could address possible impacts from overuse of the KRNCA. Another specified that “two small areas containing local rare butterfly populations should be protected.”

### **Water/Fisheries (28 comments)**

Twenty-eight comments targeted issues relating to water or fisheries management. The majority of these stressed the importance of maintaining both water quality and quantity, including sufficient habitat conditions for fish and other aquatic species. Many singled out the Mattole River and estuary as needing attention, particularly concern that too much water was being taken from the watershed, leaving insufficient water in the dry season; an example follows:

“Protection and restoration of the Mattole River estuary/lagoon: The mouth, estuary and lagoon of the Mattole River are critical to the life history of the Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*). Currently, the estuary suffers from multiple cumulative impacts, including excessive sediment inputs, high water temperatures and a lack of complex instream habitat structure and riparian canopy. The BLM should commit to specific goals for estuary restoration and protection, including the retention of riparian forests, restoration of in-stream fish habitat (including the enhancement of cold water pools within the mainstem), and protective measures to prevent the future export of water from the estuary/lagoon system.”

A number of other comments raised questions more generally about watershed management and restoration. A few were concerned about adverse effects on water stemming from recreation uses, such as concentrated camping use near the mouths of creeks in the backcountry, and possible contamination of these areas with human waste. One person specifically raised the issue of marijuana growers affecting water quality and quantity. In addition, several management suggestions were made with regard to road or facilities maintenance, such as water drainage off Lighthouse Road or possible contamination of Bridge Creek from BLM's equipment yard.

### **Threatened and Endangered Species (5 comments)**

Five comments suggested special attention be given to threatened and endangered species. One specified that grazing and recreation uses should be managed so as not to damage a population of *Layia carnosa* near the mouth of the Mattole River. Another focused on prioritizing the reintroduction of rare or endangered species to the area, as well as protection of existing populations. The overall sentiment is well summed up by the following comment:

“The BLM should prioritize the protection of imperiled species in the King Range and should continue and expand its research work on the status and distribution of rare aquatic creatures and wildlife in the area, including the Cape Mendocino snail and Humboldt marten. BLM should work with Humboldt State University and other researchers to advance scientific understanding and knowledge of the natural diversity in the King Range.”

### **Marine and Coastal Resources (10 comments)**

Ten comments expressed concerns for marine and coastal resources in the King Range. Several identified tidepools as needing better protection and public understanding/respect, particularly at Shelter Cove. One comment requested that abalone fishing be retained. Four specified that oil spills constitute a special threat to the coastline, particularly from possible off-shore drilling leases. And one individual suggested that the King Range be recognized as a Pacific coastal fish sanctuary, giving formal recognition to the ocean resources as well as those on land.

### Fire Management (51 comments)

Fifty-one comments addressed fire management, protection and prevention. Roughly one-fourth of these were fairly general, expressing concern about fire danger in the area and the BLM's role in protecting resources and property against damage. One person suggested writing a "pre-fire plan," and quite a few highlighted the importance of giving natural resources maximum protection while treating areas for fire-related concerns. Two people raised the issue of aesthetics in fire management, maintaining a "wilderness" quality in the landscape while protecting against fire danger. One letter eloquently outlined the role of fire in a general sense:

"Fire is a natural part of the ecosystem. We envision the King Range of the future as wild, but not necessarily the same mosaic we see today. Prioritize fish, wildlife and aquatics in fire treatment areas. A 'let it burn' policy that protects human life and property should be developed. The beauty, species diversity and human opportunity to reflect on death and life after fire are public values that reach far beyond the scope of this scoping process."



A number of comments stressed the need for fuel load reduction to help avoid catastrophic fires, including such management activities as clearing brush or thinning small trees to reduce highly flammable understory vegetation. Several emphasized that this work should utilize ecologically sensitive methods, in particular no use of herbicides, and not to allow the cutting of larger timber under the guise of fuels reduction. A specific tool mentioned by six comments is prescribed burning, particularly its role in both maintaining natural habitat and reducing fuel loads. However, several commenters expressed concern about the risks involved with prescribed burns. One letter sums up this theme particularly well:

"The California Department of Forestry's Forest Resources Assessment Program rates many areas, such as Prosper Ridge, Wilder Ridge and Mill Creek as having 'high' or 'very high' levels of hazardous fuels buildup. These conditions occur on both private and BLM lands, and it is critical that fuels build-up is addressed across ownerships. The Council

encourages BLM to develop a formal hazardous fuels reduction program that incorporates mechanical thinning, prescribed burning, and maintenance of historical grassland areas. This program must be ecologically appropriate—no clearcutting and no herbicide application.”

Quite a few people also pointed to the need for greater education on fire safety for both residents and visitors to the area. Several voiced concerns about campfires causing a larger fire through carelessness or lack of knowledge about the fire danger in the area, particularly as use levels increase; one cited the BLM’s responsibility to protect local communities from problems caused by visitors. Others emphasized working with private landowners in fire protection and prevention:

“Obviously population growth at Shelter Cove and continued subdividing of parcels in the Mattole valley means that the BLM along with CDF will be under greater pressure to provide protection from wildfires in what is now called the ‘urban-forest interface.’ The revisited fire management plan may emphasize working with private landowners living on parcels near the boundaries of KRNCA to ‘fire proof’ their residences and outbuildings based on excellent guidelines established by CDF. More money spent on such outreach to private landowners means less money needed to ‘fight’ wildfires.”

In addition, seven comments addressed specific management activities for the prevention or suppression of fires. These included considering fire management needs when decommissioning roads, such as providing needed fire breaks and maintaining access for fire suppression. One writer also cited the lack of water at Tolkán and Horse Mountain campgrounds as adding to the fire danger, and suggested digging wells and adding rock around fire pits at campsites to help alleviate the risk.

#### **Historic and Cultural Resources (14 comments)**

Fourteen comments urged continued protection of historic and cultural resources in the planning area, such as “Please use every law on the books to ensure full recognition and protection of indigenous and other cultural sites.” Several specified Native American sites, such as the middens on the beach, and uses of the land as needing better preservation and interpretation. One individual requested that fencing around beach middens be removed. Spanish Flat was called out as an area where cultural sites were in particular danger of degradation or destruction. One person wrote a lengthy comment and request for additional research into place names at the King Range, specifically possible connections to Hawaii.

### **4.1.5 Other Public and Commercial Uses**

#### **Grazing/Range Management (16 comments)**

Sixteen comments addressed range management on the King Range. Most of these called for a reduction or elimination of livestock grazing, often referring to this use as “not natural” or incompatible with the primitive character of the area. In addition, several advocated recognizing the importance of native grasses and using management efforts to discourage invasive/exotic species and restore native grassland habitat. One comment suggested the possible utility of grazing as a management tool:

“We would like to see the plan propose that grazing continue only in existing allotments, or be used elsewhere in a limited fashion for fire or noxious weed management.”

A local organization again singled out the grazing allotment at Spanish Flat as needing priority for closure, due to damage that cattle grazing may be causing to cultural sites.

#### **Forestry/Logging (53 comments)**

Fifty-three comments voiced concerns related to trees or timber harvest within the planning area. A large number of these stressed the importance of restricting or prohibiting logging of commercial timber or large-diameter trees. Many of these comments added the caveat that smaller-sized trees could be cut for the purposes of fire management or habitat restoration; a typical comment is as follows:

“The law that created the King Range National Conservation Area allows logging, but does not say what kind of logging may occur. I would like to see the new National Conservation Area plan limit tree cutting to only small trees along roads and near communities for fire safety, or in previously logged areas to improve plant and wildlife habitat.”

Roughly 10% of the comments in this category specifically requested protection for old growth forests as a crucial part of protecting the area’s watersheds and ecological diversity. Several others raised the issue of forest diseases, specifically sudden oak death, and suggested washing facilities be installed to ensure this disease does not make inroads into the King Range.

#### **Special Forest Products (11 comments)**

Eleven comments were received in regards to special forest products and their collection or use, with the highest number of comments specifically aimed at mushroom collecting. Several appreciated being able to collect mushrooms and encouraged sustainable use of these and other forest products as long as they were “carefully monitored ([with] adaptive responses incorporated in plan).” Others echoed this latter concern more strongly, voicing the need for better understanding of the ecological impacts of mushroom collection. One comment suggested a permitting process for mushroom and wildcraft materials (such as beargrass) collection (note that such a system is already in place), two others wanted no commercial extraction of mushrooms to be allowed. One person advocated the cutting of firewood.

### **4.1.6 Administrative**

#### **Land Tenure, Realty, Private Property (29 comments)**

Twenty-nine comments addressed issues pertaining to land tenure, realty and/or private property. Overall, these highlighted the need for definition of the BLM’s acquisition policy:

“The Management Plan provides BLM an ideal opportunity to articulate a policy guiding any future land acquisition for parcels within, adjacent or proximate to the King Range NCA.”

A little over half of these related to acquisition of land within the King Range boundary. Several suggested the need to purchase remaining private inholdings to unify the region's management, recreation access and reduce the threat of private development. Two specified acquisition of lots in Shelter Cove to help alleviate development pressure and to provide more public access to the coast.

In contrast, some comments indicated a sense that public ownership in the area needs to be balanced with private holdings, a concern that private landowners are being "squeezed out." A few directed the BLM to use conservation easements or other alternatives to acquisition as a method to protect aesthetics or link trails. One writer suggested an additional benefit from this approach:

"Conservation easements and living trust on surrounding private parcels introduce to the public/private timber land owners a new way of managing not just parcels but landscapes, collectively and cooperatively."

Four comments advocated specific acquisitions outside of the King Range boundary. These included expanding the boundary or otherwise linking adjacent State Parks to the KRNCA, acquiring beach properties north of the Mattole River, and creating a wildlife corridor to Six Rivers National Forest.

Eight comments were received that dealt more with the BLM's relationship with private property owners in the area. Several specified that the BLM should only acquire land from willing sellers. Two others voiced their appreciation for the continued access allowed to entitled private inholders, although a third person wanted air access to Big Flat closed. One person called generally for respect of private property rights, and another suggested that the BLM should:

"Increase awareness of beneficial use of private inholdings: rescues, litter removal, etc. Also demonstrates good neighbor policy to public."

### **Wilderness and All Other Special Designations (67 comments)**

Sixty-seven comments focused attention specifically on designation of wilderness or other types of special areas. Among these, many simply stressed the importance of continuing to manage parts of the King Range as wilderness areas, particularly the western slope and roadless areas:

"Create a wilderness preserve—let nature manage the King Range—'less is more' philosophy. Our planet is shrinking fast . . . we need to honor nature and our entire planet and not assume we know how to 'manage' anything better than she does."





A few people identified concerns about wilderness management: at a public meeting, one group suggested that accommodations are needed to allow continued restoration work within areas of wilderness designation; another person wrote that the historic uses of the landscape, including ranching, off-road vehicle use, and private property ownership, ought to preclude it from being considered a wilderness.

Nearly half of these referred specifically to the designated Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) and their management; a typical comment follows:

“I understand that the King Range comprises two wilderness study areas, the 34,000 acre King Range Wilderness Study Area and the 4,500 acre Chemise Mountain Wilderness Study Area. The BLM has wisely closed many roads adjacent to these study areas, effectively making a 41,000 acre wilderness, which could become law under the California Wild Heritage Act. It is imperative that the BLM manage the King Range in a manner consistent with the Wilderness Act.”

Twelve comments advocated some change to the areas formally recommended for wilderness status in the King Range, either designating more extensive areas or modifying the existing wilderness proposal before Congress so as to allow certain kinds of recreation use, such as bicycling.

Finally, several comments suggested other types of special designations, including Wild and Scenic River status:

“BLM should evaluate streams and rivers for their eligibility and suitability under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, including the BLM stretch of the Mattole River, Bear Creek, Honeydew Creek, Horse Mountain Creek, Big Flat Creek, and others.”

In addition, one person wrote suggesting the King Range should have a scenic by-way designation, another countered by writing, “Never do Disneyland-drive-by-wilderness ‘national scenic drive’ thru Mattole/KRNCA.”

### **Environmental Safety and Health (33 comments)**

Thirty-three comments related to various aspects of environmental safety and health at the King Range NCA. The largest group of these, reflecting fourteen different comments, was concerned with sanitation issues, including trash and human waste. Several specific areas (Big Flat, Buck Creek, Lighthouse Road, and backcountry camping locations) were singled out as needing

attention in this regard. Some commenters suggested improved facilities would help solve the problem; others highlighted increased use levels as the cause of the problem, and recommended better education and outreach to specific groups (such as surfers at Big Flat). One writer expressed particular concern about human impacts on water quality.

Another large group of comments (thirteen) called for the BLM to avoid using chemicals such as pesticides or herbicides in its management programs and focus on non-toxic solutions to habitat restoration and fuels reduction projects. An example of this concern reads:

“Please do not use chemicals in your removal of invasive weeds. There are several highly effective ways to eliminate these species without introducing toxic chemicals into this pristine wilderness.”

In addition, there were a number of comments addressing pollution and hazardous materials and their effects on the resources of the King Range. These included concerns about spills from possible off-shore oil drilling, and a question about aluminum and/or lead contamination from military chaff, possibly released over some parts of the KRNCA during Air Force and/or Navy training runs in the 1980s. One letter from a member of the Mendocino County Air Quality Management District raised the issue of air quality or regional haze. And one writer specified that the BLM’s “Headquarters needs to be more sensitive about petroleum products reaching Bridge Creek salmonids.”

#### **Law Enforcement and Emergency Services (19 comments)**

Nineteen comments addressed issues related to law enforcement and emergency services. Several pointed to a need for additional patrolling or law enforcement; in one case specifically to protect vehicles, another singled out the campground at Mattole as requiring greater policing. In addition, several members of the public expressed concern about illegal marijuana being grown on BLM lands. One person suggested a community watch program should be set up to assist with law enforcement needs. A few people wrote about specific situations that should be addressed by stepped-up enforcement efforts, including use of motorized vehicles in unauthorized areas, and poachers collecting too many animals or species that are off-limits to hunting. One suggestion from a public meeting was to:

“Hold visitors accountable and personally culpable for damage caused by irresponsible behavior (such as starting fires).”

In contrast, another commenter suggested, “Fewer policing actions and more education; promote backcountry ranger program, avoid heavy handed approach.” Several others also mentioned the importance of taking a non-confrontational approach to law enforcement. The backcountry ranger program was cited by a number of individuals, particularly lauding that the rangers patrol on foot (one suggested they could ride horses) rather than in vehicles.

Two comments addressed the need for emergency services, specifically that these should be designed to accommodate the increasing numbers of visitors with unknown levels of familiarity with the risks involved at the King Range. One of these even volunteered their help:

“I would like to part of or help to develop a search and rescue team. I think a quick response to an emergency (which are common in the King Range) would be an important addition to the future safety of visitors.”

### **Promotion/Advertising (11 comments)**

Eleven comments were aimed at the issue of promoting or advertising the King Range as a destination for tourists. The majority of these advocated less or no promotion of the area by the BLM, expressing sentiments such as:

“Don't do a thing. People will come anyway, no reason to exploit the coast. No advertising! The beauty and seclusion will inevitably bring more people to live here and visit. It will happen no matter what. Why hurry it up?”

Among these comments were two suggesting that any marketing messages be aimed at those with “environmental sensitivities,” or emphasizing the King Range’s unique properties as a primitive area and the need for its preservation. The overall message of these comments was concern that additional publicity and promotion would encourage more users, causing greater impacts to the character of both the King Range environment and local communities.

### **Administrative (46 comments)**

Forty-six comments addressed the BLM’s approach to the planning process and other administrative and management actions. Some of these represent questions asked at the public meetings that were answered in-person but also recorded; these reflect interest in the overall size of the King Range, where the boundaries lie, how the BLM manages natural resources, and the relationship between the King Range and the newly-designated California Coastal National Monument (covering rocks and islands just off-shore). One person wanted to know if the King Range and/or Arcata staff have authority to set wages for local contracts with the BLM.

A few comments and questions revolved around the issue of funding and/or revenue, including suggestions to seek university funding for resource studies (referencing the Point Reyes Bird Observatory as a model), and making the KRNCA more economically self-sustaining.

Thirteen comments related to the planning process directly. Several suggested periodic updates throughout the planning process and beyond, so that the public could stay involved with monitoring and implementing the plan. In addition, a few people had suggestions for better public outreach, such as building a mailing list to inform people of meetings throughout the planning process, and posting flyers in various overnight and day-use areas on the King Range to solicit comment from those using the areas but perhaps not attending meetings. Several people stressed the importance of implementing the plan quickly, and of considering future generations’ uses of the area as well as those of today. And several comments considered the larger landscape or watershed context of the plan, including the following:

“Although you are constrained by law to writing a management plan only for the KRNCA, you can still place management priorities and policy statements within the context of the larger landscape of the Mattole watershed, the Redwoods to the Seas corridor and the larger context of environmental changes and social changes in the northcoast basins bioregion.”

In addition, a group of eight comments emphasized continued coordination with neighboring or related agencies and jurisdictions. Two encouraged the BLM to include the public into these interagency discussions, and to balance agency preferences with public input. One specifically identified working with the:

“Resort Improvement District of Shelter Cove (“RID” of Shelter Cove), County of Humboldt, and the California Coastal Commission, to ensure the King Range is fully protected from encroaching development, noise impacts, and other effects that degrade the natural values and experience of the King Range.”

Six comments in this category were aimed at the degree or approach of BLM’s management of the King Range. Suggestions included adopting a more proactive management strategy, and setting appropriate goals to measure management’s effects and effectiveness. One request from a public meeting discussion was for a strong declaratory statement from BLM emphasizing public trust values over economic enterprise. One person wrote about a preference for the area before it was designated a National Conservation Area, another wrote of a need to overcome “existing antagonism to BLM (past actions and Feds.).” Finally, one writer recommended treating Big Flat as a special management zone, recognizing its unique function as a natural stopping place along the coast:

“I continue to argue that Big Flat is a special area within the WSA. It is a natural gathering site for backpackers, surfers, and other visitors just as it was a natural camping area for Indians who lived on the ‘Lost Coast’ for hundreds of years before the BLM took over management of the KRNCA. As you know, the Forest Service has developed special management plans for alpine lakes regions in designated wilderness areas in mountain regions because visitors are attracted to alpine lakes. In some cases the Forest Service has built compost toilets and designated campfire rings at some alpine lakes. I argue that Big Flat/Miller Flat is like some of these alpine lakes areas. My slogan for management of Big Flat is ‘don’t regulate, educate.’ Consider driftwood shacks as ‘folk architecture.’”

## **4.2 KEY THEMES AND PRIORITIES**

Through this scoping process, several themes and priorities emerged. They are summarized below:

### **4.2.1 Primitive Values/Character**

Public comment has generated a strong consensus opinion that people value the unique primitive character of the King Range landscape and wish to see it maintained unchanged through the next twenty years. The qualities that contribute to this primitive character include perceptions that the area is wild, relatively roadless and inaccessible, undeveloped, and not crowded. Many commenters indicated that protecting this primitive character is central to their concerns about the area. This priority given to primitive values affects almost every issue in the King Range, even as people differ as to what actions they consider compatible with the area’s character and/or what kinds of limits are necessary for its protection.

### **4.2.2 Recreation Use**

Many people identified increasing recreation use levels and their effect on the King Range as a major concern. People seem worried that the area will be “loved to death,” becoming more crowded and degraded from overuse, and cited a variety of adverse impacts they already feel

are taking place. Several ideas for limiting use levels emerged, such as a backcountry permit system, placing use caps on certain areas (particularly the Lost Coast Trail), or otherwise dispersing users throughout the entire KRNCA, rather than concentrating use along the beach. Another suggestion was to limit or discourage large encampments such as the recent Rainbow group meetings.

### ***Backcountry Camping***



Another key issue in this section is whether multiple user groups can share trails or sections of the King Range. Some members of the public suggest that only the lowest impact recreation uses, such as hiking, backpacking, or surfing, should be allowed, again citing compatibility with the area's primitive character. Others disagree, stating that to exclude activities such as equestrian use, mountain biking, and hunting would be unfair—and point out that any type of recreation can have high or low impacts on the area, depending on how people conduct themselves. Several pointed to the problems of congestion, trash, and sanitation at some of the backcountry camps as indicating that even backpacking can have negative impacts.

This leads to a third question in this category, concerning the appropriate degree of development for King Range recreation facilities and sites. Some people want to see the camps and other recreation sites remain relatively primitive in nature; others preferred improved facilities, either for greater comfort and/or to reduce impacts on the area's resources from overuse (such as informal backcountry camps where the lack of sanitary facilities may be causing contamination of streams with human waste). The construction of temporary driftwood shelters by some visitors also raised some concern from people who feel they detract from the primitive character of the beaches.

## **4.2.3 Transportation/Access**

There remains some disagreement about the appropriate level of motorized recreation access in the King Range. Some people regard the noise, tracks, and other disruptions from motorized vehicles as incompatible with the primitive character of the area, especially on the beaches. Others suggest that limiting motorized access unfairly excludes certain user groups, particularly older visitors or those with disabilities who may not be physically able to explore much of the

King Range under their own power. The question of motorized vehicle access extends to motorized watercraft (boats and jetskis) landing on the beaches as well.

Related to this question is the issue of how best to maintain the road system in the King Range and public access to it. Some desire the existing network to be maintained or improved, including such suggestions as maintaining some of the backcountry roads in a rough condition for four-wheel drive or OHV users, or paving certain popular roads. Opposing this sentiment were a number of people calling for stricter limits on seasonal use of certain routes, better maintenance to prevent environmental impacts from erosion, or decommissioning more roads completely. There are also some questions about road safety, particularly as visitor levels (and hence traffic levels) have increased in the area.

#### **4.2.4 Education/Interpretation**

There seems to be a large degree of agreement from the public that interpretation and education programs are important and should continue. Education programs seem to form a vital link between the King Range and local communities, and they voiced an interest both in learning more about natural resources from BLM programs as well as contributing to them as volunteers or local experts. Topics of greatest interest or need include natural history, resource management, cultural uses of the landscape by Native Americans, and fire issues.

#### **4.2.5 Community Support/Involvement**

There seems to be extensive local interest in continued involvement and collaboration with the BLM on various aspects of King Range management, particularly education and restoration projects. However, there is also a varying level of concern about socio-economic impacts, with some people interested in economic opportunities for local communities, and others cautioning against overdevelopment or becoming “gateway” communities. The plan will need to strike some sort of balance between these issues of economic stability/sustainability and community character and self-definition.

#### **4.2.6 Resource Conservation and Management**

Ecosystem restoration is a top concern among the public comments received in this scoping process. Many people stressed the importance of reintroducing native species, including the Roosevelt elk, other fur-bearing species, and native grasses. Of equal importance is an emphasis on removing or preventing the establishment of exotic weed species. Issues pertaining to water, watershed management, and fisheries are also of great interest, perhaps reflecting the area’s established commitment and involvement with salmon restoration and other watershed-level protection efforts.

#### **4.2.7 Fire Management**

There is a clear concern about fire danger in the King Range and the BLM’s role in protecting resources and property from damage. The degree of aggressiveness in fire prevention and suppression seems to be in question; some advocate maintaining road access and fuels management, others prefer a lighter touch on the land. The risk of prescribed burns causing damage counterbalances in these public comments with the benefits in maintaining natural



habitat and reducing fuel loads. There seems to be a strong call for additional fire safety education, both for visitors recreating in the King Range and for residents. Better knowledge is seen as key to better protection.